

**Friendship Heights
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
June 8, 2010**

Voting Members Present

Joe Dixon	GEICO
William P. Farley (Vice-Chair)	Town of Somerset
Kerri Gates	The JBG Companies
Tiffany Gee	Chevy Chase Land Company
David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Bill McCloskey	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Robert Schwarzbart (Chair)	Friendship Heights Village Council

Non-Voting Members Present

Sandra L. Brecher	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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TMD Staff Present

Nakengi Byrd	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Jim Carlson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Sheila Wilson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

Absent

Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Kenneth Hartman	B-CC Services Center
Christine McGrew	M-NCPPC

Guests

April Birnbaum	Lerch, Early & Brewer
Robert Cope	Grove Jaskiewicz & Cobert (Past Chair)
Arthur Holmes	Director – MC DOT
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Julian Mansfield	Friendship Heights Village
Barbara Tauben	FH Village Civic Assn.

Abbreviations used herein include:

CIP = Capital Improvements Program

CSS = Commuter Services Section

DOT = Department of Transportation

RFP = Request For Proposal

TMD = Transportation Management District

WMATA = Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Item 1 & 2-Introductions/Minutes Approval: Members and guest introduced themselves; the May minutes were approved without changes.

Item 3-Chair Comments: Chair **Robert Schwarzbart** welcomed **Arthur Holmes, Jr.**, Director of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said **Mr. Holmes** is central to the Committee's mission and involvement in the Transportation Management District (TMD).

Mr. Schwarzbart, noting that he would not be a candidate in the election for Committee Chair to be conducted later in the session, thanked the Committee members for entrusting him with the Chair for two terms. However, he would continue to represent the Village of Friendship Heights on the Committee.

Mr. Schwarzbart stated he particularly would miss the close association he has with the County personnel who work on the Committee. **Sandra Brecher**, Commuter Services Section (CSS) Chief, has brought knowledge, substance and professionalism to the Committee sessions and was also instrumental in bringing the TRiPS Commuter Store to the community. In her monthly CSS updates, **Ms. Brecher** gave the Committee much in the way of information and much of herself. **Mr. Schwarzbart** offered his thanks to **Ms. Brecher**. Appreciation was also extended to Planning Specialist **Jim Carlson** for his assistance in putting together the agenda and other meeting materials; also for arranging for the many distinguished speakers who have addressed the Committee, including today's guest, and for attending to other matters in the TMD. These include his current efforts to increase Committee membership and to facilitate repairs of the defective walkway, bench and curb stone at our local bus terminal. **Mr. Schwarzbart** thanked **Nakengi Byrd**, CSS Office Services Coordinator, for her assistance in preparing the meeting minutes. He also thanked Marketing Specialist **Sheila Wilson** for her TMD outreach efforts.

Mr. Schwarzbart noted that the Committee has a record of solid achievement. The Committee led the charge to save the Friendship Heights bus terminal when it faced closure; successfully moved the taxi stand back to its historical and more accessible location on Wisconsin Circle; worked to correct a series of dangerous conditions on Friendship Boulevard and elsewhere; and participated in traffic studies with the State Highway Administration and **Barbara Tauben's** group, the Friendship Heights Village Civic Association, to make it easier for infirm pedestrians to cross the street more safely – especially to gain safer access to the two medical buildings on Wisconsin Avenue. The Committee is currently dealing with street lighting issues and earlier had joined with the local business community in Friendship Heights Village Manager **Julian Mansfield's** campaign to save the Friendship Heights Village Post Office.

Mr. Schwarzbart, in concluding, thanked his friends at the Village of Friendship Heights, **Julian Mansfield** and **Leonard Grant**, for their guidance and support, noting that if it seemed to anyone from all of these thank yous that he had been fronting for a whole organization, they'd be right. And now it will be someone else's turn.

Mr. Schwarzbart introduced DOT Director **Arthur Holmes**. **Mr. Holmes** was appointed Director of what was then the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation in October 2004. He continued as Director of the Department of Transportation (DOT) after that body was so reconstituted. Overseeing approximately 1,500 employees, the Director's office provides overall management of the department and its mission of furnishing public transportation and parking, maintenance and construction of roads, and management of sidewalks and bikeways. Through two primary units, Management and Administrative Services, and Transportation Policy, the Director's office focuses on administrative tasks in the department and coordinates policy issues.

Mr. Schwarzbart said copies of the DOT organization chart were available in the meeting materials.

Mr. Schwarzbart noted that the TMD Advisory Committee serves as adjunct to the Commuter Services Section of the Division of Transit Services.

Before becoming a Departmental Director, **Mr. Holmes**, a retired Army Major General, served as Director of Montgomery County's *Go Montgomery!* traffic congestion relief program. He has seven

years experience on Montgomery County's Planning Board, serving as Commissioner, then as Vice Chair and Chair. During his more than 26 years of top level management experience, **Director Holmes** served for eight years as Vice President of Logistic Applications and then as President and CEO of Automated Sciences Group, Inc., a Silver Spring-based high-tech corporation with 300 computer scientists and engineers. **Director Holmes** serves on the board of the NAACP, the Shady Grove Adventist Hospital Foundation, Leadership Montgomery Foundation and the Olney Theater.

Mr. Schwarzbart said the Committee members are grateful that **Mr. Holmes** has made time to be with them today. **Mr. Schwarzbart** asked the Committee to join him in welcoming DOT Director **Arthur Holmes**.

Item 4-Discussion/Q&A: **Mr. Holmes** thanked the Committee for his introduction. **Mr. Holmes** declared that he has attended the meeting primarily to listen to concerns and try to answer them. He said he would get back to the Committee on any matters that he could not answer at the meeting.

Mr. Holmes said the mission of DOT is to provide an efficient and effective transportation system. Some in the County believe the department is interested only in roads, which is not the case. **Mr. Holmes** has, since his membership on the Planning Board, espoused that there are really three elements to be concerned about:

1. Transit
2. Pedestrian Mobility (including hiker-biker trails)
3. Vehicular Travel

Montgomery County is in the second or third most congested area of the country, the Washington Metropolitan Region. The County cannot buy enough buses to end the congestion, and purchasing more buses would simply add to it. We do have a program to bring the total number of buses to 600 by the year 2020, which is dependent on completing a bus depot in the northern part of the County.

There is a pedestrian safety and mobility element headquartered at DOT. The County is tracking vehicle-pedestrian collisions in its High Incident Areas, and making traffic fixes for those particular areas.

In the area of vehicle mobility, the Department does have to provide adequate roads. However, the County cannot build enough roads to relieve congestion. Nor will transit and pedestrian projects be enough to relieve congestion: the elements must be considered as legs of a 3-legged stool in order to be effective. Making the three elements work is the overall mission of the Department.

Mr. Holmes declared that he has an excellent staff, and he hopes they have been responsive to the needs of the community. If there are areas of concern not being addressed, he said he would like to know about them. He added that he is very interested in learning what's going on outside of the Executive Office Building in Rockville and invited questions from the group.

Mr. Schwarzbart said the **County Executive Leggett's** proposed budget contained cuts to Ride On bus service, and the County Council has weighed in on those proposals. He asked where things then stood. **Mr. Holmes** stated that there will be no eliminations of any complete routes, but in some instances the frequency of the bus service will change – for example, a bus currently scheduled to come every 15 minutes may come every 25 minutes; late night service may be delayed or, in some instances, eliminated. No complete routes have been eliminated. **Mr. Schwarzbart** expressed his thanks to **Mr. Holmes**, as he was concerned that cutting certain routes would strand members of the community. Two routes that were of concern are the Ride On Route 23 to Sibley Hospital and the T2 which travels on Willard Avenue. **Mr. Holmes** said the methodology of the transit system is to look at platform hours of usage and ridership; the **County Executive** had evaluated these routes based on those two criteria. When the

Council responded that it wanted those two routes re-examined, the cuts were done in a ‘surgical’ fashion in order to preserve them.

Mr. Schwarzbart said road maintenance could be improved, particularly on Willard Avenue which has seen some deterioration due to recent construction. **Mr. Holmes** said he did not know of any particular repairs scheduled for Willard. The County has retained a firm to evaluate every mile of roadway that is a County responsibility, and the company has graded those particular roads. The Department is looking at how this list has been arranged in terms of repair priority, and that is the instrument guiding the repair work.

There is money in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for road repairs in the current fiscal year which can be used for present needs. **Mr. Holmes** said the Department would look at conditions on Willard Avenue.

David Glass asked if there was a mechanism for contacting DOT to report problems. **Mr. Holmes** said there is information contained on the Department’s web site for contacting staff for issues, such as filling pot holes, patching that needs to be done, etc. **Mr. Holmes** said residents can also call his office directly at 240-777-7168, or send an email (**Mr. Holmes’** business card was made available).

Mr. Holmes said the County will launch its new 311 help system on June 16th. The 311 number will provide answers and help for all the services in the County. Calling 311 will ensure a resident’s concern is routed to the correct department or division.

Mr. Glass said that one problem in the Friendship Heights area is identifying jurisdictional boundaries, particularly along Western Avenue. The District has jurisdiction over Western Avenue and apparently about 40 feet beyond it into the Maryland side. This creates problems, especially when repairs are needed at the corner of Wisconsin and Western – they aren’t really in Montgomery County, but we cannot always get the District to address them. **Mr. Glass** asked if there was some way the Director could assist with this issue.

The current issue concerns a large curb stone at the corner of Wisconsin and Western that has been knocked out of place; the jurisdiction appears to be in the District, going by the jurisdictional marker on Wisconsin Avenue. **Mr. Glass** said it was his understanding that the State Highway Administration (SHA) would be looking into the matter, but it appears to be a District issue. **Mr. Carlson** added that SHA had confirmed it is a Maryland project but that money for repair would not be available until July. **Mr. Carlson** placed hazard cones at the site until SHA can evaluate. **Mr. Holmes** said that the information can be called in to his office or emailed and he would get it to the proper authorities. The DOT budget was cut 23 percent this year, so understandably the County cannot take on something that is the responsibility of another agency.

Bill McCloskey added that, although July may be only a few weeks away, the problem with the curb stone has been there for about 10 weeks. **Mr. Holmes** said he could talk with the SHA District Engineer about expediting repair. **Mr. McCloskey** added that communication with the District has been an ongoing problem, with emails and calls often ignored. **Mr. Holmes** said he has had very little interaction with the District DOT, but this is because he has not had cause to do so. No one has brought up issues to him personally, but he has no problem talking with District officials, and the same can be said for SHA officials.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked if the Department had any influence with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). **Mr. Holmes** said the County has a close working relationship with Metro, and the Department has a staff member, **Gary Erenrich**, whose primary function is liaison and

coordination with WMATA. **Mr. Erenrich** attends all WMATA board meetings, so we have a very good relationship with WMATA.

Mr. Glass asked if there was any way to improve WMATA's general responsiveness on issues since Montgomery County has representation on the board. **Mr. Holmes** said he works with the Montgomery County representative, **Peter Benjamin**, and others on the WMATA board, so he does have some influence in that regard.

William Farley expressed concern about the use of speed humps on County roads, and asked how the 2009 criteria for their use, published by the County, were developed. **Mr. Holmes** said the criteria were developed in DOT, went through the Council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy & Environment (T&E) Committee and were vetted for public comment.

Robert Cope said that although it may not necessarily be the Director's problem, there are a number of inoperable street lights along a section of Western Avenue. He said he thinks it may be a permitting problem, citing the long amount of time it took for the lights next to Wisconsin Place to be turned on after the development came on line. **Mr. Cope** said that even though the lights are within the District boundary, it still appears to be a Montgomery County Planning Board operation (the lights are considered part of the Chevy Chase Land Company development). That development selected the street lights and other amenities. **Mr. Cope** asked if it is DOT or Department of Permitting that signs the necessary permits to get power to the lights. **Mr. Holmes** said Permitting would have the final say on the lights; if someone can obtain the numbers affixed to the light poles, someone in DOT can follow up – the County works closely with Pepco. **Mr. Cope** said Montgomery County DOT was very responsive and worked with other responsible agencies and Pepco to get the lighting issue at Wisconsin Place resolved. He added that, as with the Army, when command of a group is transferred to another command there is a 'salute' exchanged, formally signifying the transfer; similarly, DOT or responsible parties at New England Development exchanged salutes and transferred the power issue over to Pepco in order to get the lights on. Something similar should probably take place for the lights along Western Avenue.

Tiffany Gee, representing site developer Chevy Chase Land Company, said she will look into the lighting issue on Western.

Mr. Holmes said someone in DOT will be able to follow up with the District DOT if the light pole numbers are identified.

[Since the meeting date, the lighting issue has been resolved by the Land Company.]

Mr. Schwarzbart said there have been meeting discussions about car sharing, which is something the County has been promoting. He said in the Friendship Heights area there are no County-owned parking areas to accommodate car sharing, as in the other TMDs. **Mr. Schwarzbart** suggested that commercial lots be considered for this purpose, and cited the other various transportation modes present in Friendship Heights – the Metro station, bus terminal and taxi stand. There is commercially-owned parking under the bus terminal which would be ideal for car sharing, but would have to be negotiated by the County. **Mr. Holmes** said anything having to do with car sharing would be the responsibility of Commuter Services; the County has issued a Request For Proposal (RFP) for the operation of car sharing facilities within the County operated garages.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked about the County's snow removal budget for the coming year, citing last winter's snow storms. **Mr. Holmes** said it will probably be inadequate if the same thing happens this year, but that snow removal is a high priority in spite of budgetary constraints so the money will be found. Last year's storms were considered 'hundred year storms,' so are not expected to be as severe this year.

Mr. Holmes said that usually a supplemental appropriation is sought and granted when snow removal exceeds the budget. Snow removal is a high priority for the **County Executive**; it was the topic of his first briefing upon taking office. The County takes snow removal very seriously – DOT will get the resources it needs to accomplish it.

Mr. Schwarzbart said the County has been promoting bike use which is a good idea in general, especially in parts of the County that have less traffic congestion but not well suited for Friendship Heights, one of the County's more congested areas. There really is not an accommodation for bicycle use in the TMD. **Mr. Schwarzbart** questioned whether there should be an affirmative promotion of bike use in Friendship Heights. There is an enormous amount of vehicle and pedestrian traffic along Wisconsin Avenue which flows into the side streets; impatient drivers attempting to pass bicyclists might suddenly move out of their lanes at some of risk. There could be further risk to pedestrians when bicyclists, trying to escape vehicular traffic, go onto the sidewalks.

Mr. Holmes said the County adheres to the Master Plan process for recommendations such as these (bikeways, paths, etc.), because these elements all go through a public comment process. The County's emphasis is always on safety and has an office devoted exclusively to it, but there is always some potential for conflicts with motorists and pedestrians. **Mr. Holmes** said he believes the Friendship Heights Sector Plan takes into account the unique features of the area in its bikeways plan. The Sector Plan was one of the first such plans **Mr. Holmes** worked on during his tenure with the Planning Board. **Mr. Holmes** added that he does not decide on his own to put in a bike path – all such items are vetted through public comment on the Master Plan and Sector Plans. **Mr. Holmes** emphasized the importance of public participation in the Master Plan process while it is being developed. Once something is in the Master Plan, changing it is very difficult.

Mr. McCloskey noted that **Councilmember Marc Elrich** was seeking funding for a Bus Rapid Transit study and funding was approved. What is the status of the project? **Mr. Holmes** said work is being done on the project and some conclusions / findings will be available in December or January. DOT Deputy Director **Al Roshdieh** is leading the study.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked if there was anything **Mr. Holmes** could tell the Committee about the Purple Line. **Mr. Holmes** said the preferred alternative and a route has been chosen by the State, but there is no money at present for further work.

Mr. Glass asked what areas of the DOT budget would be impacted by budget cuts. **Mr. Holmes** said there may be a slower response to some requests, such as filling pot holes. Cuts were made to the operating budget, which primarily is the 'people' side of the budget.

Barbara Tauben expressed concern about cuts to pedestrian safety, affecting public outreach, education and the Street Smart program. **Mr. Holmes** said education and outreach programs will continue but will have to be reduced and more carefully targeted. The overall budget cut of 23 percent means that all programs must be reduced significantly, but the County will make the effort to compensate.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked if the County would restore funding to services when the fiscal outlook improves. **Mr. Holmes** said permanent cuts are not envisioned for any service and every effort would be made to restore them. The budget crisis is not viewed as an opportunity to reduce service. There are a few very low-performing Ride On routes that will have to be closely evaluated because they are not economically feasible, the County's goal is always to expand service to its residents. However, even in the case of some low-performing routes the County may endeavor to continue them because of their importance to the community.

Mr. Cope said the current parking situation on Friendship Boulevard tends to favor long term parking because there are no meters and poor enforcement. He asked if meters could be installed on Friendship Boulevard between Willard and Western Avenues. Two hour metered parking would discourage all day parking and would allow residents better access for shopping, etc. **Ms. Brecher** asked about the current parking arrangement. **Mr. Cope** said it is technically two hour parking but there is no enforcement, so people are parking all day. **Ms. Brecher** said that may be the only place in Friendship Heights that is not in the Village of Friendship Heights that has on street parking.

Ms. Brecher added that when the TMD was established in 1999 the County surveyed the area to look for opportunities for County controlled parking facilities, but there were none at the time. This was, however, before Friendship Boulevard was completed. **Mr. Holmes** said Friendship Boulevard would be included when the County looks at the results of the parking study currently underway.

The Committee thanked **Mr. Holmes** for taking the time to attend the meeting.

Item 5-Pedestrian Safety Concerns: **Mr. Schwarzbart** said most of the issues pertaining to the street lights and other pedestrian safety concerns were covered under the previous discussion, and asked if there was anything to add.

Mr. McCloskey said there had been no action on adjusting the traffic light at the Geico entrance, although the District had been approached on it. The original request was to adjust the light for flashing yellow along Western Avenue during the evening hours when Geico was closed. At present, the light cycles to red although no one is entering or exiting the Geico property. **Mr. Carlson** said he had been in touch with the District about the light and would follow up on the issue.

Mr. Glass asked about the process for getting parking meters installed, and if it involved public meetings. **Ms. Brecher** said she wasn't sure meetings were involved, but safety and engineering aspects are evaluated. The Committee could have someone from parking attend a future meeting to explain the process. **Ms. Brecher** said that a pilot had recently been completed in Bethesda to allow payment for meters by cell phone, offering patrons the advantage of cell phone notices when their parking is about to expire and remotely adding value to the meter. **Mr. McCloskey** added that meter money is also refunded for unused parking time. **Ms. Brecher** noted that many meters have a two hour limit in certain neighborhoods or zones, limiting time spent by any one vehicle to two hours.

Item 6-Elections: **Mr. Carlson** asked for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair for the year beginning July 1, 2010. **Joe Dixon** nominated **William Farley** as Chair to replace **Robert Schwarzbart**. No other nominations were offered. **Mr. Farley's** nomination was seconded and the Committee approved. **Mr. Dixon** nominated **Tiffany Gee** for the position of Vice Chair (vacated by **Mr. Farley**). No other nominations were offered. **Ms. Gee's** nomination was seconded and the Committee approved:

- **2010-2011 TMD Advisory Committee Chair: William Farley / Town of Somerset**
- **2010-2011 TMD Advisory Committee Vice Chair: Tiffany Gee / Chevy Chase Land Company**

Item 7-July Meeting: **Mr. Schwarzbart** said July attendance at the last two TMD meetings has been poor. There was no quorum in 2008; and 2009 offered a bare quorum. He suggested the July meeting be canceled now and into the future. It can be embarrassing for the Committee when this happens and there are guests, and July is also a vacation period for many people. **Mr. Schwarzbart** suggested a vote to cancel future July meetings.

Ms. Brecher expressed concern that canceling July's meeting would mean not meeting for two straight months because August is also a non-meeting month. The Committee would not be meeting again until September. There are no huge decisions on the horizon, but that does make it more of a quarterly meeting schedule and there could be intervening events the Committee might want to address. **Mr. Schwarzbart** noted that the Silver Spring TMD Advisory Committee meets only nine times a year.

Ms. Brecher said that in the case of Silver Spring, the TMD skips only one month at a time in its meeting schedule.

Mr. Glass said he agreed with **Ms. Brecher**. Even if there is no quorum present, the meeting is important in terms of continuity.

Mr. Carlson said reducing the number of meetings by one will not affect the attendance requirements – members can miss up to two consecutive or three non-consecutive meetings under the current arrangement before their position is considered vacated.

All members present indicated they would be present at the July meeting.

Ms. Brecher suggested taking a straw vote at the June meetings to see who is coming to the July meeting, making it an ad hoc meeting. **Mr. Schwarzbart** agreed this would be a useful way to approach it.

Members indicated by a show of hands to agree to the ad hoc arrangement for future July meetings. The current July meeting will move forward.

Item 8-Updates: **Ms. Brecher** reminded members about the June 10th “Sustainable Commuting Workshop,” which will present information on ‘Live Near Your Work’ programs and telework programs to the business community. The workshop is in the lobby auditorium of the Executive Office Building (EOB), 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, from 8:30 am to 11:30 am. **Ms. Brecher** said there are a number of interesting speakers, including **Director Art Holmes**, **Steven Silverman**, Director of the Dept. of Economic Development and **Rick Nelson**, Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs. There will also be speakers from the State discussing specific programs available for assisting employers and employees in obtaining housing near their places of employment. The program will include a number of panelists discussing what their businesses have done in the areas of employee housing and telework; and there will also be exhibitors. The program is free; registration can be done online.

Ms. Brecher said the proposals for the car sharing RFP has gone out. Responses are due this Friday (June 11) and Procurement will evaluate them for responsiveness and other requirements and send them to Commuter Services.

Commuter Services has decided to go with a new contractor for evaluating the Annual Commuter Survey. The contractor that had been used was taking far too long to analyze the results of the survey. The current contractor has also been used by the Council of Governments for its Transportation Emissions Reduction Measure (TERM) analysis, having to do with air quality regulations, so that is principally why Commuter Services used it for analysis. **Ms. Brecher** said she is hopeful that the survey analysis will now be completed much sooner. The fact that the survey is now done largely on line also moves the process along faster.

Ms. Brecher said the CSS marketing services contracts are still being finalized, which has been a very long process. Several new marketing firms will be under contract for FY11, although whether or not there is any money to use them remains to be seen. Commuter Services does have money available through its grants for certain expenditures, such as the Sustainable Commuting Workshop, so there will

be funds available for some marketing outreach. Commuter Services looks very carefully at how money is spent, especially under the current budget. Every expenditure now goes through an extensive approval process.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 AM
Next meeting date: July 13, 2010